



City Hall Diary: Historic Gem Meets Structural Deficit

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, April 09, 2007

Do you remember your 8th grade graduation? I do. I graduated from Hoover Middle School in 1984 at the Municipal Rose Garden Park in the historic Rose Garden neighborhood. I remember the day perfectly. I wore my best collared shirt with slacks and sported a “bowl-style” haircut. The sun was shining, the smell of roses lingered in the air, and the freshly-mowed grass was dark green. I remember walking through the pristine gardens with the girl whom I had a crush on. Students and parents took family photos in the gardens with the colorful roses as a natural backdrop.

That was 23 years ago. Things have changed.

On my twelfth day as councilmember, I met with city staff and 18 Rose Garden residents to do a walkthrough of the Rose Garden Park. Instead of the pristine, well-kept, fragrant park that I remembered, it felt and looked more like one of those movies where residents abandon an area after a major disaster. I saw weeds that were taller than the rosebushes, crabgrass growing in empty rose beds, and bathrooms you would not want your children to use.

Rose Garden Park also hosted our sister city from Japan ten years ago. The delegation from Japan is returning at the end of the month but they will not be visiting the park this time. The Rose Garden neighbors are ashamed of the state of the park and feel embarrassed to bring our guests there.

Rose Garden Park is not alone. Newly-built Cahill Park off The Alameda and many other parks throughout San Jose are not receiving the care that they deserve. Budget cuts are only part of the problem. The bigger issue is that San Jose is not being creative in adopting new ideas to solve these problems. When I was campaigning—not that long ago—I proposed the idea of a pilot program to outsource maintenance for some of our neighborhood parks. The residents that I talked to—Democrats, Republicans, Independents and others—agreed that such a pilot program for some of San Jose’s parks was a good idea.

The residents of San Jose want their neighborhood parks back, as they justly deserve. Let's put our pride aside. The city can't do it all anymore and it's time to quit thinking it can. It's time to be creative and solve problems. Let's consider outsourcing park maintenance so that the students graduating at Rose Garden Park this year won't trip over weeds.

Pierluigi Oliverio represents District 6 on the San Jose City Council.

This is the first of a series of guest columns that will chart his experiences at City Hall.

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